

JUST how many thousands of miles Harold Shepherdson has travelled on football business would require a computer to work out—and the final figure would reach astronomical proportions.

In his years of service with England over, he might have thought he'd be able to forget the trains, planes, cars and coaches—but he was wrong. Because as dossier-compiler-in-chief to Middlesbrough FC, as well as the club's assistant manager, he is kept on the move all season.

Not abroad, of course, but in these jet

days a journey to another country is often quicker than one to another county!

Recently he went to see Wycombe Wanderers play Sutton United in an Isthmian League match and wasn't tremendously impressed. But as he told me yesterday:

"Wycombe played approximately ten times better against Boro than they did against Sutton! They had also played a lot better at Bournemouth in their second-round Cup replay, so it's obvious they raise their game for the big occasion."

"Another thing—against us they had three of their top players in the side who missed the match against Sutton.

They've got a number of players with amateur international experience and some who appeared in the Great Britain Olympic side. Wycombe must rank as one of the finest non-League sides in the country."

Nobody who saw Boro held for 90 minutes to a goalless draw at Wycombe last Saturday, and for 89 minutes in their 1-0 replay win last Tuesday night will disagree with that.

But Wycombe are forgotten now. It's the future that matters to Shep as far as dossiers are concerned.

Though he remembers the past with affection and pride . . .

Degrading pitch, says Charlton

By Joe Melling

MIDDLESBROUGH manager Jack Charlton last night attacked the F.A. Cup system which forces top clubs to play on "degrading pitches."

Charlton, happy to escape with a replay from Wycombe Wanderers' slope, insisted: "I honestly believe it is degrading for professional footballers to have to play on a pitch like Wycombe's."

"We took a lot of hammer from the critics on Saturday because we only managed a goalless draw. Yet in truth it was a magnificent achievement."

"Their pitch was at least 15 yards narrower than ours, it sloped from touchline to touchline and the surface made any attempts at reasonable ball control hopeless."

"When a Football League side is drawn away in the F.A. Cup, I think the tie should be switched to the nearest League ground to the little club."

"Believe me, there are teams in the First Division who would have had no chance at Wycombe on Saturday. We got a replay simply because we worked like hell for it. We had to."

But Charlton is adamant that Boro will get through tonight's replay. "On that pitch, Wycombe's tactics were brilliant," he said. "But I am afraid if they play in the same way at our place, they'll have no chance at all."

JACK IS FLAT OUT

By BOB CASS

MIDDLESBROUGH, after surviving the slopes of Wycombe, will be "flat out" tonight for a plum fourth round FA Cup-tie against North-East neighbours Sunderland.

And confident boss Jack Charlton predicted yesterday: "They won't stop us from playing this time."

While praising the performance of the Isthmian League part-timers on Saturday, Charlton had

strong words about their pitch.

"I think it's degrading for professional footballers to have to play on a ground like Wycombe's," he said.

"We earned a replay by playing very well. There are teams in the First Division who would have had no chance."

Charlton added: "I still don't know whether Wycombe can play or not."

If I'd been in charge, I would have been highly satisfied

"Things will be different tomorrow. If they don't come out and at least try to play football they'll have no chance."

Charlton will wait for a fitness report on striker Alan Foggon, who has a muscle strain, before naming the side.

Wycombe boss Brian Lee was able to name

"same again" yesterday as all his players have managed to get the day off.

Lee said: "We'll train tomorrow morning and then come straight home by coach — win, lose or draw."

● FOURTH DIVISION Crewe yesterday offered their vacant manager's job to Roy Chapman, boss of Stafford Rangers, the Cup giant-killers from the Northern Premier League.